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U. S. Dept. of Agriculture
THE LOCAL 4-H CLUB LEADER - A CORNERSTONE

A radio talk by R. A. Turner, U. S. Department of Agriculture, Washington, D.C., delivered Saturday, July 2, 1932, in the National 4-H club radio program, broadcast by a network of 59 associate NBC radio stations.

How do you do, 4-H club folks and friends.

It is indeed a pleasure to talk with you on this National 4-H Club radio program on the topic of "The Local Club Leader - A Cornerstone," in addition to speaking during our usual monthly musical period.

All of you 4-H club members who are listening to this radio program will want to join with me in paying our tribute to the volunteer leaders of the 4-H clubs throughout the United States. We all have long recognized that these leaders occupy one of the key positions in the 4-H club movement. May I quote a significant statement relative to club leadership made in a recent public address? This is the statement, quoting: "Local leaders of 4-H clubs have a greater opportunity than any group today to exert the most potential influence upon rural life in America. How important it is, therefore, that they be the proper individuals." End of quote. Since, under their guidance, 4-H club work has developed so steadily, it is evident that their influence has already been felt in rural America. And so to you, volunteer local club leaders of America, all 4-H club folks pay their tribute.

At present more than 98,000 volunteer 4-H club leaders are at work in the United States. They give unselfishly of their time and thought and effort to the boys and girls of their neighborhoods. Most of these leaders are busy farmers or farmers' wives, many are engaged in other occupations, and still others are rural young people above 4-H club age.

The total number of 4-H club members in the United States last year was over 890,000. There are approximately 6,000,000 boys and girls 10 to 20 years of age living on farms and about 5,000,000 boys and girls living in rural towns and villages. On the basis of the 1931 reports of all extension agents, we can estimate that one out of every 12 rural boys or girls last year came under the direct influence of a local 4-H club leader.

We may state the comparative size of the enrollment in 4-H club work in another way. On the average, members continue in club work something over two years. So about 445,000 boys and girls undertook club work for the first time in 1931. Each year about 1,200,000 rural boys and girls reach the 10th year of age. On the basis of these figures, we can estimate that, at the present rate, one out of every three of all rural boys and girls is a member of a 4-H club at some time between the ages of 10 and 20. This information is significant. It illustrates how heavily local club leadership counts in this phase of cooperative extension work in agriculture and home economics. The local leader is a veritable cornerstone in the 4-H club structure. And we must remember that the influence of these local leaders does not stop with the club member, but carries on indirectly to other rural boys and girls not engaged in 4-H club work.

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A very gratifying development is the interest shown by the many former club members, who continue in extension work and become leaders of groups of younger club members. This trend is most heartening. These young folks recognize what club work has meant to them and they desire to make it possible for other boys and girls to obtain similar training and experience. Each year more and more former 4-H club members join the ranks of the volunteer local club leaders.

Club leaders desire to be even better prepared to do their work. They loyally attend the county 4-H club leader conferences conducted by the county extension agents, or the specialists from the State College of agriculture. All of our experience seems to prove that these leader conferences increase the volume and better the quality of club work in the counties. It is to the credit of the local club leaders that they assume this professional attitude toward their job.

The volunteer 4-H club leader, through extension teaching, through recreation, through music, and through the creation of ambition, opens a new world of opportunity to 4-H club members. 4-H club work does not lure members away from the rural community, but helps them become, on their native heath, the most forward-looking, the most cooperative, the most cultured, and the most successful citizens of the United States.